

Goals of black lives matter movement



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In the United States in February of 2012, the nation felt a mixture of emotions. This including being both disturbed and confused about the recent and horrifying tragedy of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin. In the area that Martin had been staying at in Sanford, Florida, a neighborhood watch had been formed in response to the high crime rate that had been frequently occurring.

George Zimmerman regularly watched over the neighborhood with his firearm that he was licensed to carry and was the man on duty the night that Trayvon Martin died. According to CNN journalist Greg Botelho, Zimmerman had followed Martin who had left his home at night to go shop at 7-Eleven.

Zimmerman was instructed by the policemen he had contacted to not follow the 17-year-old, but he disobeyed their orders. Martin, who had been running at times on his way back home, knowing that he was being followed, was fatally shot in the chest by Zimmerman. Zimmerman would go on to say that he acted out of self-defense however, further police investigations as well as the 7-Eleven camera footage of Martin shows that there is no evidence that Martin was acting in a threatening way to anyone. With that said, Martin's family, along with thousands of others, believe that Zimmerman had racially profiled Trayvon Martin and that was the reason that he was targeted (Botelho 2012).

George Zimmerman was arrested for his actions however, on July 13, 2013, he was acquitted and rendered not guilty on all counts. After this, social activists began to spring up in hopes to seek both justice and change. In the United States, the social movement that is the most recognizable is Black

Lives Matter. This movement wanted to change the urgent issue in the United States of racial injustices inflicted towards African Americans, which still exists today. However, many Americans are unsure of how to feel about this movement and they question its productivity in achieving any of its main goals. I believe that the Black Lives Matter Movement has achieved most of the goals it set up upon its creation in 2013, making the movement relatively successful.

Contents

Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi were the three women who started the Black Lives Matter Movement, in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman. According to the official Black Lives Matter website, Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It began as a call to action, or as author Nikita Carney called it in the journal *Humanity and Society*, The call for Black lives to matter is a rallying cry for ALL Black lives striving for liberation (Carney 180-199). To summarize this concisely, these quotes mean that the main goals of the movement when it first formed were to create an awareness of systemic racism towards blacks in America, to allow blacks to struggle through this together, and to stop the rampant and deliberate violence inflicted on us by the state (Herstory 2014). It is important to define key terms like systemic racism because they are vital to understanding the bigger picture. Systemic racism means that there are core racist realities that are manifested in each of society's major parts. This includes individual, institutional, and structural forms of racism in the United States (Cole 2018).

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Once again, the Black Lives Matter Movement's main goals upon its creation in 2013 included creating an awareness of the systemic racism towards African Americans in the United States, allowing blacks to struggle through this together, and stopping the rampant and deliberate violence inflicted upon African Americans by the state. I will fully examine each of these goals to determine if they have been achieved. This is necessary in determining if the movement has been successful. Firstly, I will argue that the movement has created an awareness of systemic racism by looking at the growth of the movement over the years. Then, I will argue that the movement has allowed blacks to struggle together due to the number of organized protests set up throughout the country. Finally, although there are many statistics out there that provide different numbers and types of statistics, there are estimates that show that the number of African Americans shot and killed by police enforcement in the United States has decreased over the past few years. With these three things taken into consideration, I will come to the conclusion that the Black Lives Matter Movement has fulfilled its main goals, thereby making it an overall success. I will also address the common opposing argument which says that the movement has been unsuccessful because it has not achieved its main goal of decreasing the number of African Americans killed by police enforcement in the United States.

A whole new dimension of the Black Lives Matter Movement was created following the tragic death of Michael Brown who was fatally shot by police officer, Darren Wilson, in Ferguson, Missouri. The Black Life Matters Ride was organized and held in Ferguson a few weeks after the tragic death of Michael Brown, in an effort to protest this type of police brutality. For fifteen days,

the protestors stood their ground in the streets of Ferguson despite being tear gassed and pepper sprayed day after day. When the protest concluded, eighteen people went back to their home cities and set up Black Lives Matter chapters there. There are now over thirty chapters set up in the United States. This ultimately helps their cause to grow, as does the attention it receives on the social media platform Twitter (Herstory 2014).

#BlackLivesMatter was trending all over social media after Michael Brown's death, helping to spread awareness to millions of people globally. Celebrities and athletes all over the world also often took to Twitter to publicly share their support for the cause. This was important because they were the ones who supported the movement publicly. This included arguably the most recognizable athlete on the planet, LeBron James, who would often remain silent on certain issues during his interviews, and later make his voice heard by tweeting out a hashtag having to do with them (Cassilo 427).

From July 18, 2016 through May 1, 2018, the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag has been used on Twitter an average of 15, 856 times daily. Tweets with this hashtag would usually consist of one of the following topics; fatal police-related encounters, violent acts in general, police and law enforcement, national politicians and political parties, race, or protests (Anderson 2018). Over the past five years the hashtag has consistently remained relevant, which proves that it has not lost its ability to create public awareness. There is no denying the growth that this movement has seen as shown in the number of chapters set up throughout the country, along with the amount of attention it received on social media. This is why I believe that the Black Lives Matter Movement has successfully achieved its first goal of creating a

nationwide awareness of the systemic racism inflicted upon African Americans in the United States.

The movements next main goal was to allow African Americans in the United States to struggle together. The way that they have achieved this is through the peaceful protests that were organized all across the country. University of Kent professor, Dr. Richard Norman, wrote an article in 2017 where he discussed the reasons why protests in general are so important. In this article, he talks about how protests start a debate. I believe that they first create and awareness of a potential issue which leads to debate, which ideally would lead to a change being made. He also states that by protesting, people realize that they are not alone (Norman 2012). I could not agree more with Dr. Norman's statement. This is because I believe that there is a sense of unity among any protesters, which can be reassuring to them that they are not alone.

It will also provide them with hope that they will overcome the issue that they are protesting. In this case of course, the protests pertain to specific injustices inflicted upon African Americans in the United States. The most common example of this that the country has seen is police brutality. Over the past 1, 580 days, there have been at least 2, 588 Black Lives Matter protests in the United States (Robinson 2018). This amount of protests, held at different times throughout the year, and held at different locations all throughout the United States ensures that all African Americans, or anyone who wants to support the movement, has the opportunity to attend if they wish to do so. This is the reason why I argue that the Black Lives Matter

Movement has achieved its second main goal of allowing blacks to struggle though this together.

The third and final main goal the movement upon its creation in 2013, was to stop the rampant and deliberate violence inflicted upon African Americans in the United States. I believe that the movement has also successfully achieved this goal. Firstly, I will have to determine what exactly is meant by rampant and deliberate violence (Herstory 2014). Because of all of the media coverage over the past five years, the topics discussed in the tweets that had #BlackLivesMatter in them, and the purposes of all of the protests throughout the country, I am concluding that the rampant and deliberate violence means police brutality shown towards African Americans. Police brutality is the use of excessive and/or unnecessary force by police (Mastrine 2018). The most serious form of police brutality and the form that has sparked a large amount of Black Lives Matter protests in response is when an innocent or non-threatening civilian is fatally shot by law enforcement. To stop anything that is on as large of a scale as this may just about be impossible, or at the very least it would take a lot longer than a couple of years to accomplish. Therefore, I am measuring the success of this goal by determining if the number of this form of police brutality over the past few years has stopped increasing.

It is easy for some people to assume that African Americans are killed a much higher rate than any other race in the United States, because of all the media coverage on tragic shooting and Black Lives Matter protests. However, it may be surprising for these people to hear that this is not the case. In fact, whites are killed at a significantly higher rate by law enforcement than

African Americans. However, this does not mean that African Americans are not killed at an alarming rate. The reason why the number of African Americans killed by the police is so disturbing is because African Americans only make up thirteen percent of the entire United States population. This correlation between the low population and high amount of deaths by law enforcement is exactly why the Black Lives Matter Movement first began.

According to senior reporter of the Guardian, Jon Swaine, in 2015 there were 1, 136 deaths at the hands of law enforcement. African Americans made up twenty seven percent of this total. These statistics show that African Americans were killed at a much higher rate than any other race in the United States. Unarmed black Americans were killed at five times the rate of unarmed white Americans in 2015. The following year in 2016, Swaine reported that there were 1, 091 deaths at the hands of law enforcement in the United States. The percentage of African Americans killed in this year decreased from twenty seven percent to twenty four percent. In 2017 however, the percentage rose back up to twenty seven percent as 1, 129 deaths were recorded (D'Onofrio 2018). This means that the number of African Americans fatally killed by police officers in the United States has not increased over the past few years. It is for this reason why I believe that the movement has successfully achieved its third main goal.

There are obviously arguments that opposes the one that I have made concerning this issue. I find that it is important to address the most common of these arguments to further support my conclusion. This opposing argument says that the Black Lives Matter Movement has not been successful as it has not achieved the most important goal that it set upon its

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creation in 2013. Those that believe in this often say that the most important goal set up by the movement was to stop police brutality against African Americans in the United States, or at least see a significant decrease over the past few years. They will argue that all of the statistics that exist on the issue are remarkably unreliable and do not show a significant decrease. I personally believe that even if there is not a significant decrease in police brutality against blacks, that the Black Lives Matter Movement has still been a success. This is because they did achieve their other two main goals and there has not been an increase in police brutality against blacks in the past few years.

There is one part of the opposing argument that I recognize I will have to concede to. It is, in fact, true that there is no single source that keeps reliable records of this kind of information. The information I am examining simply comes from whatever those sources were able to record over the years. Every source may have different types of statistics or the same type, yet they may come to a different conclusion because their numbers are different. This is most definitely a problem and needs to be addressed sooner than later. The FBI does not require police officers to report the racial demographics of a person involved in a fatal incident. Police can also opt out of reporting other details of these fatal incidents that would be important, such as how and why a person was killed (Swaine & McCarthy 2017).

These pieces of information are vital in examining whether police brutality towards African Americans has increased or decreased over the past few years. This is the part of the opposing argument that both sides can agree that coming up with a conclusion to the third main goal of the movement

would be much easier to do if there was this information existed and was reliable and accessible. Therefore, I'm sure people on both sides of the argument would like to see the FBI require police officers to report all of the information when a fatal incident occurs.

To conclude my argument, I will review what the issue was and what my position on the issue consists of. The Black Lives Matter Movement was created in 2013 in response to the tragic death of Trayvon Martin and the acquittal of George Zimmerman. Martin was unarmed and innocent yet was fatally shot by George Zimmerman. Thousands of other situations like this occurred, such as the killing Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.

Nationwide, people turned to the movement to bring about a positive change to injustes like these. Upon its creation, the movement created three main goals that they would set out to achieve. These issues were: to create an awareness of systemic racism towards blacks in America, to allow blacks to struggle through this together, and to stop the rampant and deliberate violence inflicted upon blacks.

I have come to the conclusion that the Black Lives Matter Movement can be considered a success due to the success it has had in achieving its main goals. The movement created an awareness of systemic racism in the United States through social media platforms as well as through the thirty chapters set up throughout the country. The movement has also allowed blacks to struggle together through the thousands of protests that have taken place in the last three years. Finally, there has not been an increase in police brutality against African Americans over the past four years. The way that I

interpreted this, this fulfills their third main goal of stopping the rampant and deliberate violence inflicted upon African Americans.